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FARM SCIENCE AND BUSINESS NEWS

Broadcast by Wallace Kadderly, Radio Service, United States Department of Agriculture, in the Department of Agriculture's portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Friday, January 12, 1940 over the NBC Blue Network.

To the information Mike Rowell has given us, let me add a few highlights from an analysis of the wool situation that was released yesterday afternoon by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

The wool specialists in that bureau say that:

By the time the new wool marketing season begins (that is, by April 1, 1940) the carry-over of wool produced in the United States is likely to be the smallest in recent years.

Because of these small supplies of available United States wool, interest in the wool market the next few months will be centered largely on foreign wools. Imports of wool for manufacture into clothing probably will be larger in the early months of 1940 than at any time since the early months of 1937.

Consumption of wool in the United States in the year 1939 was close to the total consumed in 1935.....and the 1935 figure was 659 million pounds, grease basis .....the largest in recent years.

Prices of domestic wools are now about 40 per cent higher than before the sharp rise in September of 1939.

In most of this country the Japanese beetle is still a stranger. If you live in an area where this beetle has not yet appeared you may think you have no concern with this highly undersirable immigrant. But you are likely to make its acquaintance sooner or later. If that happens I think its safe to say that you will not meet the beetle with a welcome.

So, it is good news for almost everyone that the scientists who have been fighting this pest of gardens, shade trees, and lawns, have found a helper that is likely to cut down the destructive effect of beetle attacks. This helper is a bacterial disease that attacks the grubs of the beetle in the soil and causes them to turn a milky white and then die without breeding a new generation to take up the destruction.

The Japanese beetle got its start in this country several years ago in New Jersey and has spread over all that state and has advanced a few miles each year into the neighboring states. If scientists had then known as much about fighting the pest as they do now it might have been possible to eradicate the beetle completely, but they didn't and they now see no probability that man can ever check its natural spread to any part of the United States where the conditions are suitable for its development. The weather, either cold or dryness, may keep it out of northern and western areas, but elsewhere the Japanese beetle is expected to spread.

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This disease organism that causes what is known as the milky white disease, cannot be expected to eradicate the beetle anywhere. But the scientists who have been watching the results for several years say there seems to be a good chance that this disease will keep down the numbers of the beetles and cut down the damage they do.

The best feature of this milky disease is that it can be spread in advance of the worst of the beetle attack, and can then live on in the soil, infect the beetles and so keep down the multiplication. Adult beetles eat leaves, flowers, and fruit of many trees, shrubs and garden plants. At the worst they will practically strip all the leaves from favorite plants. The grubs of the beetles do their worst work in sod, as in lawns. Sod that is well fertilized and cared for can grow in spite of a few beetles, but when there are too many the beetles cut and eat the roots faster than they can be renewed. In practical tests this disease has killed enough of the beetles to let the sod keep in good condition.

This season, the plan is to get the milky disease well colonized in the older areas of infestation where the grub population in the soil is sufficient to insure establishment. When the results of this work are known---and as the beetle advances in other areas--it will then be possible to consider the extension of the distribution of the milky disease to other infested areas.

Evidence that the farmers of the nation are making progress in this battle against loss of soil, and grass and trees and water is found in a report just made by the Soil Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture on soil conservation districts. This report says that more than a million farms are now included in soil conservation districts organized during the past two years....and that an additional 400,000 farms are included in districts now in process of organization.

The 217 districts already organized cover nearly 120 million acres of land in 26 States. In these 217 districts the land owners are bringing group action to bear on planning, in the first place, things that can be done toward solving social, economic, and physical problems in their communities. Then, after the plans are made (and agreed upon) concerted action comes into play in doing the work set up in the plans.....action that can be more effectively done in unison than by individuals working alone.

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